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SLAVERY AND THE BEGINNINGS OF INDUSTRIALISM IN THE AMERICAN COLONIES¹

ONE of the characteristic features of the evolution of the western nations in the last two centuries is the passing of comparatively simple agricultural societies through various stages to that condition known as industrialism. Reduced to their lowest terms, the chief factors which caused such changes were, first, increase in population, and second, exhaustion of the land, both in quantity and quality. These conditions led to diversification of industry, to an increase in the number and variety of artisans, trades, and occupations, not specifically agricultural. With a continued increase in population and a tendency toward compactness, with rapid exhaustion of the soil, with a growing scarcity of, and high prices for, food supplies, new lands were opened up and surplus population was either exported or, if not, it was diverted to manufacturing industries, trade, and commerce. This process was hastened in the Old World by the colonization of new lands overseas, and the resulting opportunities for the more rapid production of wealth through the development of the resources of these lands, the production of raw materials for use in manufacturing, or to supply other needs, and the establishment of markets for the sale of manufactured goods.

The American colonies supplied England with a portion of the new lands she needed in order to make the transition from agriculturalism to industrialism. Likewise the colonies were compelled to depend on England, or some other country, in making a similar transition for reasons to be noted. The influence of some of the factors mentioned, with others to be mentioned, caused the colonies to pass through the earlier stages of the process leading to industrialism even before independence was secured. This period of semi-industrialism is marked by a rapid increase of population, exhaustion of land and soil, and in consequence a tendency toward a diversification of farming and of occupations. Other important influences affecting this movement were the commercial policy of

¹ This article is submitted as only a tentative study of a large subject. Important aspects of this subject are but lightly treated and others not considered at all. Emphasis is placed on only two colonies, South Carolina and Virginia. Since however nearly three-fourths of all the slaves in the South, at the opening of the Revolution, lived in these colonies, we may consider that the economic conditions described are typical of the other southern colonies.

England, which tended to stimulate as well as to retard certain manufactures. England also was in part responsible for scarcity or high price of imported manufactured goods, due to poor transportation facilities, or to the interruption or retardation of trade, because of wars or for other causes. The colonial governments were thus led to stimulate manufactures by bounties and other methods in order that the colonists might meet pressing and immediate needs, and individuals were stimulated to manufacture for profit under such conditions. The high cost of transporting and marketing the bulky goods produced by the colonists, in connection with overproduction, especially of tobacco, and England's restrictive commercial and trade policy, often resulted in inability to ship goods, or in such low prices for the product as to make the colonists either unable or disinclined to purchase manufactured goods abroad. This also led to diversification of farming and of occupations, thus again stimulating certain forms of manufactures. In the decade preceding the Revolution the movement for independence, in its economic as well as in its political aspect, stimulated manufactures. The colonists wished to avoid the payment of taxes on imported goods, both because of the principle involved and because of high prices. Patriotic motives, the desire for economic as well as political independence, the non-importation and non-consumption agreements, all these stimulated manufactures to supply pressing and immediate economic needs. In general we may say that there was, in the generation or so preceding the Revolution, a rapid increase in the number of men who were convinced that it was more desirable, practical, and profitable to employ labor and to invest capital in industries or manufactures involving partial or complete transformation of raw materials into finished products, than to confine themselves exclusively to agriculture or to occupations involving only the production and transportation of purely raw materials. With the one exception of food supply, all the factors so far mentioned, viz., increase of population, exhaustion of land and soil, scarcity or high price of manufactured goods, encouragement of specific manufactures by England and by the colonial assemblies, low price of exported products, especially tobacco, the influence of the movement for independence, and the proportionate return to be obtained on capital invested—all of these factors were influential in producing a diversification of farming and occupations, and an increase in manufacturing in the southern colonies as well as in those of the North.²

² There is no comprehensive account of the development of manufactures in

In the so-called tobacco colonies of Maryland and Virginia, the general tendency of the tobacco régime was to make it more and more difficult because of overproduction and low prices³ to make this product alone pay for the manufactured goods imported. Hence many a planter was faced with a loss of credit, heavy debt, or bankruptcy on the one hand, or the necessity of finding a remedy to meet the situation on the other. This remedy might be based on one or more of the following principles: that of decreasing the product, or using some other means of increasing the price of the same; that of raising other agricultural products for which a higher relative price could be obtained; that of purchasing fewer manufactured goods from abroad; or that of producing such goods at home. To counteract the bad effects of the English commercial policy, a few of the planters made the discovery, as early as the end of the seventeenth century, that it was more profitable to plant partly exhausted tobacco lands, and sometimes even fresh lands, with corn, wheat, or other cereals, or turn them into pasture lands for cattle and sheep, than to grow tobacco.⁴ Moreover, much of the land unsuited to tobacco culture could be profitably used for such purposes, and as the centre of population moved westward it became necessary, for the upland soil was lighter and more sandy. Such crops were also desirable and even necessary to supply food—corn, for example—for the rapidly growing population, and especially for the negro slave. Corn was also necessary to feed the cattle, as the practice of allowing herds to roam the woods proved too costly. There was thus some tendency toward a system of agriculture based on corn, wheat, and other cereals, cattle, sheep, and hogs, and later, farther to the south, cotton—products more suited to exhausted and poorer soils—than on tobacco, hemp, and flax, those products which both demanded a rich soil and at the same time exhausted it most rapidly.

the southern colonies. For illustrations of the points in this paragraph consult in general, V. S. Clark, *History of Manufactures in the United States, 1607-1860* (Washington, 1916); R. M. Tryon, *Household Manufactures in the United States, 1640-1860* (Chicago, 1917); and J. L. Bishop, *History of American Manufactures, 1607-1860* (Philadelphia, 3 vols., 1861-1868). In particular consult P. A. Bruce, *Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century*, vol. II., chs. XVII. and XVIII., "Manufactured Supplies: Domestic"; and Clark, "Colonial Manufactures", in *The South in the Building of the Nation*, ed. J. C. Ballagh, vol. V. On soil-exhaustion see Bruce, *op. cit.*, I. 424-425, II. 566.

³ Bruce, *op. cit.*, I. 345, 389-394, 401. In 1664 the Virginia and Maryland crop amounted to 50,000 hogsheads, valued at £150,000 sterling, yet the price was so low that the planters were brought in debt £50,000. *Ibid.*, I. 391.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I. 459-466, 370-372, 481-482. In the winter of 1673, 50,000 cattle are said to have perished in Virginia. *Ibid.*, I. 372.

We may now inquire what was the relation of these agricultural tendencies of the eighteenth century to other industries and occupations resulting, and particularly to the occupations of negro slaves. It is obvious that with these raw materials present and plantation needs greatly extended, some needs might be satisfied by transforming a portion of these raw materials, through primary or secondary processes, into manufactured articles. If a surplus could be produced for purposes of export, the profit obtained could be used to supply other manufactured articles for which tobacco alone could no longer provide the funds. We know that as the eighteenth century progressed, there was in all the southern colonies a large increase in the production of corn, wheat, and other cereals, and in the raising of cattle, sheep, and hogs. Likewise we know that there was a large increase in mills for grinding grain, both for home consumption and for export. The production of cereal and animal products was stimulated by the opportunity for profit in provisioning ships, both English and colonial. The great increase in shipping in the eighteenth century called for large quantities of provisions, such as flour, ship-bread, beef, and pork; and besides there was a great demand for these articles in the West Indies, in exchange for molasses, sugar, and other products needed by the American colonies. We know that the number of tanneries increased; that the southern colonies passed numerous laws to prevent the export of hides and leather in order to encourage the tanning of leather and allied industries; that leather manufactures, including especially the manufacture of the rougher grades of shoes, increased. We know that the textile industries—the weaving of cloth from flax, wool, and cotton—increased, both for home consumption and for neighborhood exchange.⁵

There was an increasing desire to secure a greater return from the capital invested, by making greater use of the natural resources of the plantation, both because of necessity and for possible profits. Beverley had called the attention of the planters of Virginia in 1705 to their wastefulness and lack of energy in this respect.⁶ There were large supplies of raw materials on many plantations, the natural products of the land, especially forests, that led to occupations

⁵ There were exported from the upper district of the James River, from October 25, 1763, to October 25, 1764, among other articles, 29,145 bushels of wheat, 3003 pounds of bacon, 50 tierces of bread, 62,763 bushels of corn, 1098 barrels of flour, and 920 barrels and 1000 pounds of pork. *Virginia Gazette*, February 12, 1767. For the increase in the leather and textile industries see Clark and Bishop, above, indexes, "Maryland", "Virginia", etc.

⁶ R. Beverley, *The History of Virginia* (London, 1722), p. 255.

based on lumber products. The needs of England compelled her to stimulate the production of naval stores, and the southern forests were available for masts, spars, planks, and boards for building ships and boats of all kinds and for repairs on the same, as well as for the production of tar, pitch, and turpentine. There were, besides rough manufactures from the forests, other lumber products requiring more skill. We have evidence of a great increase in the manufacture of staves, hoops, and "headings", in order to provide for the enormous number of hogsheads, barrels, and tierces, containers for tobacco, rice, and other products to be exported. We know besides that great quantities of the above articles were manufactured for export⁷ to the West Indies and other countries, containers for molasses, sugar, etc. We know that various other industries were based on cultivated or natural products of the soil, such occupations as brewing, wine-making, and the production of bricks, rope, hats, salt, soap, candles, powder, potash, and a variety of domestic utensils and implements.⁸ We know that the eighteenth century witnessed a rise in the standard of living; that there was a demand for better houses and a tendency to lath and plaster, to shingle and clapboard, to build brick houses, in place of the earlier unfinished log or board structures.⁹ The great increase of slaves and of production called for a larger output of lumber for building operations, for barns, tobacco-houses, outbuildings, landings, warehouses, etc. We know that as a result of these industries there was an increase in the number of artisans and craftsmen of all kinds; that effort was made by the colonial governments, particularly through the apprenticeship acts, to increase the supply;¹⁰ that as a result there was an increase of millers, brewers, weavers, butchers, tanners, curriers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, sawyers, carpenters, shipwrights, brickmakers, masons, plasterers, and other skilled workers.

This diversification of farming and industry is the fundamental factor leading to the employment of the slave in non-agricultural labor and manufacturing processes. We have seen that the move-

⁷ From the upper district of the James River, October 25, 1763, to October 25, 1764, there were exported 566,800 staves, 9250 hoops, 80,860 shingles, and 3800 headings. *Virginia Gazette*, February 12, 1767. From Charleston, November 1, 1763, to November 1, 1764, there were exported 1,553,365 shingles, 700 laths, and 228,015 staves and headings. *South Carolina Gazette*, October 29, 1764.

⁸ For these industries see indexes of Clark and Bishop above.

⁹ Hugh Jones, *Present State of Virginia*, ed. J. Sabin (1865), p. 36 (London, 1724); Beverley, *op. cit.*, p. 251 (1722).

¹⁰ These acts have been summarized, and their workings described, by the writer in articles in the *School Review* for June, 1919, and January, 1920.

ment began in the latter portion of the seventeenth century, and was due principally to the shortage of goods from England, high prices for the same, and low prices for tobacco. The movement, however, had not made much headway by 1705, according to Beverley, though there is good reason for believing that he underestimated the amount of manufactures at this date.¹¹ The evidence of diversification of farming and of occupations increases rapidly after 1720. We have references to such in the reports of governors to the Lords of Trade, in reports of travellers, in the advertisements in newspapers, and in the statistics of the export trade in manufactured articles. We note diversification in the production of cereals, in the increase of mills, of cattle and sheep and industries dependent on them. Further evidence of this tendency is seen in the legislation designed to increase the supply of artisans and in the acts to encourage manufactures and to prevent the export of raw materials. Such evidence proves that the industrial development of the southern colonies in the eighteenth century at least made possible the employment of the negro slave in non-agricultural occupations.¹²

It is evident that the part the slave might take in these rough manufactures would depend on the number of slaves available, their intelligence, and the relative profit to be obtained by use of this kind of labor; in other words, on the question whether it was possible, desirable, or necessary, practicable, and profitable. The eighteenth century witnessed a rapid and large increase in the number of slaves, both from importation and from births.¹³ There was therefore a large possible supply. Negroes were of two general classes: first, "raw" or "Guinea" negroes, those imported directly from Africa; secondly, those "country-born". The latter might be imported from the West Indies or from some other colony; or they might be negroes born and brought up in the colony where they were employed. It is evident that the second class would constitute the most important possible sources for the supply of slaves who might be trained as artisans.¹⁴ "Country-born" negroes would generally have greater intelligence and a better knowledge of the English lan-

¹¹ Beverley, *op. cit.* See note 2.

¹² The reports of governors at various dates are summarized by Clark, in *History of Manufactures*, ch. IX. See also A. A. Giesecke, *American Commercial Legislation before 1789*, and Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41.

¹³ For the slave population of the southern colonies in 1755 and 1775 see article by the writer, "Slavery and Conversion in the American Colonies", in *American Historical Review*, XXI. 523, note 123.

¹⁴ A few negroes imported directly from Africa may have possessed some mechanical skill. See J. A. Tillinghast, *The Negro in Africa and America*, pp. 32-33.

guage. They would be more docile, more adaptable to their environment, more familiar with the methods of production, and in general more civilized than freshly imported negroes. Indeed, the latter were often judged, *a priori*, as nothing but brute creatures without intelligence.¹⁵ The native-born negro came in contact with the civilization of the white man from birth and was disciplined, to some extent, in childhood and youth. Such discipline tended to develop the intelligence of this class of slaves, and it was from among them, by a process of natural selection, that the more capable were assigned to occupations requiring more intelligence than ordinary field labor; occupations usually calling for a certain degree of skill in handicraft. The "country-born" negroes were, however, subdivided into groups of varying degrees of ability. There were negroes of pure blood who, of course, varied in intelligence just as white persons do. But from the first there was the class known as mulattos, negroes with more or less white blood in their veins.¹⁶ It is quite generally admitted that the effect of crossing the races made most of the mulattos more intelligent than the negroes of pure blood.¹⁷ There were doubtless exceptions to the rule, but the percentage was small. This fact was reflected in the higher prices paid for mulattos throughout the period of slavery.¹⁸ There was thus a continual and increasing supply of this class, with a tendency to select from it the most intelligent for work requiring handicraft skill. Negroes of this class tended to increase in ability from generation to generation, both because of natural selection and because they were more favored. They had better opportunities for religious instruction, and for closer contact with the white population.

It was natural for a planter to employ a slave to do a piece of work requiring skill or intelligence if he had one of suitable character. If, besides, such employment was necessary, he might make the attempt even at considerable cost. In fact, we know that there was throughout the colonial period a great scarcity of free artisans in the southern colonies. We know that indentured servant artisans were insufficient in number for the work to be done and were unsatisfactory for many other reasons; that frequently, perhaps generally, they gave up working at their trade, if they had one, in

¹⁵ On the intelligence of the negro see article cited above, *Am. Hist. Rev.*, XXI. 517, 519, and notes 88, 103-106.

¹⁶ This class arose from miscegenation and intermarriage of whites and blacks. On this question see Reuter, *The Mulatto in the United States* (Boston, 1918).

¹⁷ Tillinghast, *op. cit.*, pp. 118-121.

¹⁸ *E. g.*, see note 66.

order to become farmers.¹⁹ This scarcity of artisans made it almost necessary that the planter should put forth every effort to purchase or train slaves who had skill in some handicraft, particularly as he produced staple crops on a large scale, diversified his agriculture, or began to make use of the resources of his land, whether it produced forests, animals, minerals, or other things that could be profitably transformed into goods of greater value. If at the same time there was a shortage of manufactured goods from abroad, or the price was excessively high, or the planter had no funds for their purchase, or was in debt, these were additional and pressing reasons for the use of slaves in plantation manufactures. In other words, eighteenth-century plantation economy called for more careful use of all the resources available, both for greater profit as well as to avoid bankruptcy. If, still further, there were facilities for training the slave in a trade and all or many of the above reasons were operating, a planter would almost certainly make the effort. We may note that there was the opportunity to select from large numbers, and some would be available for training because of natural aptitude, or inherited tendencies. The indentured white servant artisan, as well as the free artisan, was always a possible source of instruction. Young negro slaves could be apprenticed by masters to free white artisans to learn particular trades. They were purchased by artisans or those with skill in some handicraft, for the purpose of teaching them. Besides, slaves who had acquired skill could be used to instruct other slaves. Finally, masters could let or hire out young negroes to persons who would employ them in labor which would increase their intelligence and skill, or, if capable, masters could instruct slaves themselves.²⁰

Let us now consider the early evidence for the actual employment of slaves in industries other than those purely agricultural up to about 1740. By 1649, one man, at least, had discovered that it was possible, practical, and profitable to train slaves to be artisans and to perform simple manufacturing processes. Thus the author of *A Perfect Description of Virginia* (1649) declares that

Worthy Captaine Matthews, an old Planter of above thirty yeers standing, one of the Counsell, and a most deserving Common-wealths-man, I may not omit to let you know this Gentlemans industry. He hath a fine house, and all things answerable to it; he sowes yeerly store of Hempe and Flax, and causes it to be spun; he keeps Weavers, and

¹⁹ Their short period of indenture and the fact that they were likely to run away, were two objections. See notes 10 and 24.

²⁰ For illustrations of methods of training the slave, see Jones, *Present State of Virginia*, p. 38, and notes 25, 29, 51, 55, 56.

hath a Tan-house, causes Leather to be dressed, hath eight Shoemakers employed in their trade, hath forty Negroe servants, brings them up to Trades in his house. He yeerly sowes abundance of Wheat, Barley, etc. The Wheat he selleth at four shillings the bushell; kills store of Beeves, and sells them to victuall the ships when they come thither: hath abundance of Kine, a brave Dairy, Swine great store, and Poltery . . .²¹

Here we have, in this remarkable document, an illustration of four tendencies, important and characteristic movements of the eighteenth century; first, diversified farming; secondly, diversified industry—provisioning and tanning; thirdly, manufacturing linen cloth and shoes; and fourthly, the training of negro slaves as artisans and skilled workmen. In short Captain Matthews was a farmer, a rancher, a manufacturer, and a merchant. He ran a plantation and a factory at the same time. The inventory of Robert Beverley, sr., shows that he had a negro carpenter valued at thirty pounds. John Carter, jr., owned a negro cooper, and Ralph Wormeley a negro cooper and carpenter, each valued at thirty-five pounds sterling.²² It is said that the county records of Virginia of the seventeenth century, inventories and wills in particular, reveal the presence of many negro mechanics, especially carpenters and coopers, and negro women who had been taught to take part in domestic manufactures.²³ The only other important source for artisans was the white, indentured servant mechanic. But when his term of service expired, usually in four or five years, another would have to be purchased in England. This constantly recurring necessity for supplying the place of white mechanics led the planters to have some of their slaves instructed in the trades, even in the seventeenth century.²⁴

Owing to the rapid diversification of farming and of occupations after 1705, there was a corresponding increase in the variety of artisans. The increase in the number and variety of slave artisans may be judged from the statement of Hugh Jones in 1724, who said that "a good Negro" was "sometimes worth three (nay four) Score Pounds Sterling, if he be a Tradesman". He also says that negroes were taught to be "Sawyers, Carpenters, Smiths, Coopers,

²¹ *A Perfect Description of Virginia* (1649), p. 15.

²² Bruce, *op. cit.*, II. 405.

²³ *Ibid.*, II. 405, 471. Note also that Thomas Cocke (d. 1696), left by will a flour-mill and two tanneries, and mentioned by name one of his tanners, whom he bequeathed to his son James. Another mechanic at the mill was left "with all his tools" to his son Stephen. *Virginia Magazine of History*, III. 407-408.

²⁴ Bruce, *op. cit.*, II. 405. For similar practice of training slaves as artisans in the West Indies, see F. W. Pitman, *The Development of the British West Indies, 1700-1763*, pp. 58-60.

etc., and though for the most Part they be none of the aptest or nicest, yet they are by Nature cut out for hard Labour and Fatigue, and will perform tolerably well".²⁵ The frequent reference to negro artisans in the wills and inventories of the early eighteenth century is further evidence of the increase of this class. For example, note the will and inventory of Robert ("King") Carter, 1732. He bequeathed, among other slaves, "George the Cooper", and a negro boy who was being taught a trade by this cooper. His inventory mentions seven negro carpenters and three negro sawyers.²⁶ Richard Chapman writes in 1739 that he had a "couple of Young Slaves who are Carpenters and Coopers, who are just beginning to be of Great use to me". He then orders of his agent abroad axes, saws, coopers' tools, etc.²⁷

It is desirable to study next the early development of these same tendencies in South Carolina, and then treat the general development of these two colonies together, from 1740 to the Revolution.

In South Carolina the use of the slave in non-agricultural occupations and the effort to train him as an artisan centred first on utilizing the resources of the forests. In a description of South Carolina published in 1761, the author states that slaves could be employed in the unused part of the year when "they will have some Time to spare for sawing Lumber and making Hogsheads, and other Staves, to supply the Sugar Colonies".²⁸ The bounties paid by England for the production of naval stores—masts, spars, and especially tar, pitch, and turpentine—would give great opportunity for the employment of slaves in this industry. Sawyers, carpenters, and coopers would be needed in large numbers to supply plantation needs—lumber, for buildings and repairs, for staves, hoops, and headings, and for rice barrels.²⁹ Staves, etc., were profitable for export to the

²⁵ Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 38–39. For a similar statement of conditions in North Carolina, see letter of the S. P. G. missionary Rev. John Urmstone, July 7, 1711, in F. L. Hawks, *History of North Carolina* (1858), II. 215. See also John Brickell, *Natural History of North Carolina* (1731, repr.), p. 275.

²⁶ His will in *Va. Mag. of Hist.*, V. 412, and inventory, *ibid.*, VI. 368.

²⁷ *William and Mary College Quarterly Historical Magazine*, XXI, 93.

²⁸ In B. R. Carroll, *Historical Collections of South Carolina*, II. 204.

²⁹ "Last November I sent a fine young Fellow a Cooper to your Ladyship's Plantation to make Rice Barrels and teach two of your People that Business." Habersham to the Countess of Huntingdon, April 19, 1775. *Georgia Hist. Soc. Coll.*, VI. 242; extract in Phillips, *Plantation and Frontier*, II. 44. An account of produce exported in less than one year, from Charleston, November 1, 1751, to October 16, 1752, shows that it involved the production of 110,462 hogsheads, tierces, and barrels to hold the rice, pitch, tar, turpentine, skins, beef, and pork sent out. From November 1, 1753, to November 1, 1754, 110,714 barrels were

West Indies to be made into barrels for sugar and molasses; and lumber products of all kinds, planks, boards, etc.

In the files of the *South Carolina Gazette*, 1732 to 1776, we find evidence of slaves trained in and practising at least twenty-eight different trades specifically so named.³⁰ Of woodworkers there were seven varieties; viz., sawyers, squarers, coopers, house-carpenters, ship-carpenters or shipwrights, cabinet-makers, and wheelwrights. Of leather-workers, there were tanners, curriers, and shoemakers. Of cloth-workers there were spinners, carders, weavers, knitters, needleworkers or seamstresses, and tailors. Of those engaged in the building trades, there were brick-moulders and brickmakers, bricklayers, lime-makers, plasterers, whitewashers, painters or glaziers, caulkers, blacksmiths, and even such a trade as that of a silversmith was represented. There were also miscellaneous occupations more or less connected with the production and distribution of non-agricultural goods. There were slaves who were navigators, pilots, boatmen, porters, etc. In the above statement no account is made of the use of the slave in occupations involving the partial transformation of raw materials into forms that involve rough or primary manufacturing operations, such as preparing rice, indigo, hemp, flax, and raw silk for export, the grinding of grain, packing of meat products, and other similar occupations, where slaves performed work not agricultural. The manufacturing industries carried on may be inferred from the trades represented, and these included manufacture of lumber, planks and boards, of staves, hoops and headings, hogsheads, and barrels; the making of buildings, ships, and boats of all kinds, and of furniture, wheeled vehicles, leather, shoes, cloth, clothing, socks, bricks, lime, domestic utensils and implements.

The mechanical skill or knowledge possessed by the negro slave needed for the export of similar products—i. e., a production of 221,176 barrels in a little less than three years. But in addition, in this last period, there were exported 168,121 staves. The number of sawyers, carpenters, and coopers needed to produce this one type of article was quite considerable, and it is evident that a large portion must have been produced by negro slaves, artisans with a knowledge of the above trades. We may note in passing that there were also exported, in this last year mentioned, 952,880 shingles, and 780,776 feet of scantling, plank, and boards, some of which it is likely were produced by negro slaves. See *S. C. Gaz.*, October 16, 1752, November 7, 1754.

³⁰ This by no means exhausts the trades followed by negro slaves in this period. For example there were shingle-makers in Georgia. *Georgia Gazette*, February 16, 1774. And in Virginia, iron-workers, including "finers, hammermen and colliers". *Virginia Gazette* (Purdie and Dixon), August 6, 1767. Rev. John Urmstone of North Carolina speaks of "tallow Chandlers", "soap makers, starch-makers and dyers". Hawks, *Hist. of N. C.*, II. 215.

artisans was applied, and the production of manufactured goods accomplished, with slaves holding a variety of relationships with the person who for the moment profited by their labor. At least four distinct relationships were common. In the first place most artisan slaves of course applied their skill or produced goods when owned and kept as slaves by any free white or colored man or woman who wished to profit by such skill. Such an individual might be a rice or indigo producer, a planter, a farmer, a man or woman engaged in any of the trades or manufacturing industries mentioned above, or any other free person. Secondly, a slave might apply his knowledge or produce goods when apprenticed to some person. Thirdly, he might be hired out to some person by his owner by the day, month, or year, in town or country, for a stipulated amount. Fourthly, he might be allowed industrial freedom by his owner, or the privilege of working when and where he could find employment at his trade, either with or without previous agreement with the owner by the person employing such a slave. The condition on which the slave was allowed such freedom was that of turning over to the owner, at stated intervals, all or an agreed portion of the wages earned. A slave hired out or allowed freedom to work might be very profitable, since the return from the labor was practically all profit—a condition not possible when he was kept on the plantation and supported by the owner. Slaves might also be employed in considerable numbers by an individual or a group of persons who were producing goods in quantities. Such slaves might be owned, held as apprentices, or hired for the purpose.³¹

We may also note that five stages of production are represented in this industrial development of South Carolina, viz., first, plantation manufactures for home consumption; secondly, plantation manufactures for the purpose of disposing of a surplus within the colony; thirdly, plantation manufactures for export (the last two were known respectively as the domestic-commercial, and commercial stages); fourthly, the stage in which individual artisans or others owned or hired slaves and employed them for the purpose of selling the whole of their product, or the whole of their time and skill, for a price specified; and fifthly, the shop and factory stage of producing manufactured goods wholly by slave labor with the purpose of disposing of the whole surplus.

Evidence of the first stage, home or plantation manufactures, is best illustrated by the advertisements offering at public sale, often at auction, large lots of slaves, usually in connection with the sale

³¹ Illustrations of these relationships follow.

of a complete plantation, with lands, houses, equipment, stock, etc. Eighteen such notices, at least, are found in the *South Carolina Gazettes* before the Revolution, over half of them between 1760 and 1776. The total number of slaves in each case varied from about ten to seventy, the indefinite word "parcel" being used a number of times. In all these cases there is mention of the fact that some of the slaves are artisans, tradesmen, or skilled workers in some occupation. As the exact number of slaves of this character is seldom given, it is difficult to estimate the proportion having special skill. A typical advertisement reads as follows: "About Fifty Valuable Slaves, among which are sundry tradesmen, such as Bricklayers, Carpenters, Coopers, Sawyers, Shoemakers, Tanners, Curriers and Boat-men."³² Another states that there would be sold "A Parcel of Slaves belonging to the estate of Mrs. Mary Frost, deceased, consisting of sawyers, mowers, a very good caulker, a tanner, a compleat tight cooper, a sawyer, squarer and rough carpenter".³³ One woman was a "washer, ironer and spinner". In another lot of twenty, mention is made of sawyers, a jobbing carpenter, and butcher, "and most of the fellows acquainted with lime making".³⁴

Advertisements offering for sale one or more artisan slaves are numerous, especially ship-carpenters and coopers.³⁵ Likewise there are numerous advertisements of persons who wished to purchase slaves skilled in some trade, such as house-carpenters, ship-carpenters, cabinet-makers, and blacksmiths.³⁶ Henry Laurens seems to have been in the business of supplying skilled negro artisans for the trade, for he advertises, in 1765, for two carpenters, two coopers, three pairs of sawyers, besides other workers, for field use and for indigo production.³⁷ Another striking example indicative of the supply of slave artisans is an offer in one advertisement to sell "five negro men, two of them tanners and three shoemakers".³⁸

³² *S. C. Gaz.*, January 28, 1751.

³³ *S. C. Gaz. and Country Journal* (supp.), April 26, 1768.

³⁴ *S. C. Gaz.*, August 22, 1768.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, November 25, 1732, March 21, 1743.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, September 22, 1746, April 19, 1760, December 10, 1773.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, February 10, 1765.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, March 21, 1768. A kind of advertisement which appears very frequently refers to runaway negro slaves, and many of this class were artisans. For example, as early as 1733, we find anxious masters seeking the following runaways: three negro sawyers, hired for work in Georgia; a mustee wench, who could spin, card, and do needlework; and two sawyers, for whose return a reward of £20 was offered for each one, an indication of the value of these men to the owner. Numerous examples of this sort could be given, involving the more common trades, *e. g.*, a shoemaker and carpenter, a carpenter and cooper, and a ship-carpenter. *S. C. Gaz.*, April 7, 1743, June 2, 1733, July 28, 1733, August 29, 1743, January 23, 1746, February 24, 1746.

The practice of hiring out skilled workers must have been profitable, judging from the frequency of such advertisements. If such a man could be hired out, so that the cost of his upkeep would be met by the person who employed him, and a sum of money—say, ten pounds³⁹—be paid besides for his work for one year, that would be a very profitable investment, the interest on a thousand dollars for a year at five per cent. with practically no expense to the owner. We know that the practice was in existence from an early date. For example, a master offered to hire out a bricklayer and plasterer, by the month, quarter, or more or less time, in town or country.⁴⁰ Another offered a negro blacksmith by the month or year;⁴¹ another a bricklayer and a carpenter, both “good workmen to be hired by the month or year”.⁴² The practice of allowing slaves industrial freedom, if the wages earned were given to the master, gave such artisans the opportunity to retain all or a part of the money they earned, and to work “clandestinely”—a common phrase of the owner when he forewarned every one not to employ or hire his slave without previous agreement with the owner. Thus in one case two negro carpenters,⁴³ and in another a bricklayer were claimed by the owner.⁴⁴ Another negro carpenter worked “clandestinely” about the town and defrauded his master of “several sums of money”.⁴⁵ So also complaint was made that a ship-carpenter and a whitewasher converted wages to their own use.⁴⁶

Such an institution as the factory also existed in the pre-Revolutionary period. By this is not meant the factory system as developed later, but a building where goods were made by manual labor, usually requiring more equipment, several skilled workers of the same trade, and some division of labor, more than would be the case on the plantation or in the one-man shop. There were a number of such establishments in operation before the Revolution, which exhibited these features to a greater or less degree. In some of these institutions we find that the labor force consisted principally of negro slave artisans. From one standpoint, of course, many of the very large plantations, before the Revolution, were shops or factories, in the sense that they often manufactured goods in quantities,

³⁹ Landon Carter hired two negro sawyers (1776) for a year at ten pounds each. *Diary in William and Mary Col. Qr. Hist. Mag.*, XV. 17.

⁴⁰ *S. C. Gaz.*, July 23, 1737.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, May 29, 1755.

⁴² *Ibid.*, March 8, 1770.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, January 13, 1732.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, June 10, 1732.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, August 6, 1741.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, August 27, 1737, December 25, 1740.

had special buildings for the purpose, and made use of a number of workmen skilled in some one trade. Captain Matthews of Virginia, 1649, has already been referred to. The carpenter's or cooper's shop, where thousands of staves, hoops, headings, hogsheds, tierces, or barrels were manufactured, containers for tobacco and rice, represents a stage in advance of household production, the making of a few articles in the family kitchen. When such articles were made in quantities for shipment to the West Indies, they might with good reason be classified as goods manufactured in the shop or small factory.

Let us consider next the tanning and leather industries and the making of shoes. We may note in passing that there were exported from Charleston, in 1748, 10,356 pounds of tanned leather.⁴⁷ We find, in 1764, that two "valuable" negro men, trained as tanners and shoemakers, were offered for sale, "who can make any sort of men's and coarse women's shoes; either of them can make two pair of negro shoes a day".⁴⁸ If this statement is true it is evident that these two slaves might produce twelve pairs of shoes a week, forty-eight a month, or five hundred and seventy-six pairs in a year. If we cut this production a third or more, we still have a considerable output for a small shop or factory, with two workmen only, and it is easy to see why it might pay to manufacture shoes of this type rather than purchase them in England. Two years later, 1768, we find that John Matthews proposed to give up his shoemaking business, and to sell two or three negro shoemakers—"Said negroes have done all my business for nine years past, and are at least equal to any negroes of the trade in this province; the eldest of them only 22 years old."⁴⁹

With the approach of the Revolution, we find that small factories were established for the manufacture of cloth. Washington had such an establishment in 1767-1768, in which a variety of cloth—woollen, cotton, linen, etc.—was woven, both for his own use and for others. By the account for 1768 it appears that the weavers were one white woman, whom he hired for the purpose, and five "Negroe Girls", presumably his own slaves. In this "factory" there were spun and woven in the year 1768 for Washington's own use, 815 $\frac{3}{4}$ yards of linen and 1355 $\frac{1}{2}$ yards of woollen linsey, cot-

⁴⁷ Carroll, *Hist. Coll. S. C.*, II. 238.

⁴⁸ *S. C. Gaz.*, January 14, 1764.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, March 21, 1768. Two months later we find that Richard Downes will sell a negro shoemaker who "has been intrusted with the Care of a Shoemaker's Shop, without any Assistance from a White Man, for several years". *Ibid.*, May 24, 1768.

ton, etc.⁵⁰ We find also that the "Manufacturing Society in Williamsburg" advertised in 1777 for weavers and "5 or 6 likely negro lads from 15 to 20, and as many girls from 12 to 15", with a note added to the effect that "Negro girls are received as apprentices".⁵¹ There are also references to factories for weaving cloth, in which negro slaves were employed as weavers, in Maryland. Charles Carroll of Carrollton manufactured on his plantation coarse woollens and linen, woven in part by negro slaves.⁵² We find also that Robert Carter had a similar weaving establishment at Nominy Hall. A document, dated 1782, shows that Carter had six negro weavers, boys of from thirteen to nineteen, and four negro winders, three of them girls of from fourteen to sixteen, and "Kate", of sixty-five years, all under the management of Daniel Sullivan, weaver, "at the Woolen and Linen *Factory* at Aires, belonging to Robert Carter, Esq. of Westm'd County".⁵³

In South Carolina also negro slaves were employed in cloth-making. It is stated that the overproduction of rice in 1743, or the failure to market it because of war, "put the people [of South Carolina] upon trying to employ their negroes on sundry new manufactures of linen, woollen, etc., which they were before accustomed to take from Great Britain", but just at this time indigo planting became profitable and it defeated their interest.⁵⁴ A remarkable proposition to teach slaves the art of linen, woollen, and cotton cloth manufacture occurred in 1766. The author of the advertisement says that he will teach slaves the raising of hemp and flax, "and the Spinning of both; he will take the Cotton, Flax and Hemp, from the Seed; and the Wool from the Sheep's Back and Compleat the whole". He had laid his scheme before the "Printer" and adds the following important bit of information: "The Above Person has Credentials from Pennsylvania and Virginia, where he has taught two Factories of this kind since the year 1749."⁵⁵

Several questions are suggested by the data presented. First, is the evidence trustworthy? We may agree that without doubt slaves were trained to the trades, and worked at their calling. The evidence gives some general notion of the practice or proportion of slaves so trained, and to a slight extent indications of their efficiency. It is desirable, however, to check the newspapers from other sources,

⁵⁰ Phillips, *Plantation and Frontier*, II. 325.

⁵¹ *William and Mary Col. Qr. Hist. Mag.*, XI. 95.

⁵² Clark, *Hist. of Manufactures in U. S.*, p. 191.

⁵³ Phillips, *op. cit.*, II. 314-315.

⁵⁴ D. Macpherson, *Annals of Commerce*, III. 260.

⁵⁵ *S. C. Gaz. and Country Journal* (supp.), May 20, 1766.

because of the well-known tendency of those that have goods for sale to overstate their value and quality, especially in newspaper advertisements. Fortunately we have additional sources of information not open to this objection. It is well known that one of the most persistent inquiries of the Lords of Trade was that one which called for data on the kind and extent of manufacturing going on in the colonies. There were certainly good reasons for the royal governors to make reports which would underestimate the amount of manufacturing and to convey the impression that England had nothing to fear from the growth of manufacturing industries in the colonies. Two very interesting reports are available which give some notion of the extent of the practice of training slaves as artisans and their contribution to the production of manufactured goods. Governor Glen of South Carolina made a report of this kind in 1751.⁵⁶ He stated that there were forty thousand negroes in the province, which if valued as "New Negroes from Africa are now sold" would be worth £20 sterling per head; but this valuation did not satisfy him, considering that many of them were

Natives of Carolina who have no Notion of liberty . . . have been brought up among White People, and by White People have been made, at least many of them, useful Mechanics, as Coopers, Carpenters, Masons, Smiths, Wheelwrights, and other Trades, and that the rest can all speak our Language, for we imported none during the War, I say when it is Considered that these are pleased with their Masters, contented with their Condition, reconciled to Servitude, seasoned to the Country, and expert at the different kinds of Labour in which they are employed, it must appear difficult if not impracticable to ascertain their intrinsic Value. I know a Gentleman who refuses five Hundred Guineas for three of his Slaves, and therefore there is no guessing at the Value of strong seasoned handy Slaves, by the prices of weak Raw New Negroes.

We may note also that Lieutenant Governor Fauquier of Virginia reported to the Board of Trade in December, 1766, as follows:

But to give your Lordships a true knowledge of this matter [manufactures in Virginia] it is necessary I should add that every gentleman of much property in land and negroes have some of their own negroes bred up in the trade of blacksmiths, and make axes, hoes, ploughshares, and such kind of coarse work for the use of their plantations.⁵⁷

Another convincing source of information is the fact that in South Carolina both free white laborers and the general assembly were greatly disturbed at the rapid development of the number of

⁵⁶ MS. Transcripts for South Carolina from Public Record Office, vol. XXIV., 1750-1751, pp. 315-316.

⁵⁷ *William and Mary Col. Qr. Hist. Mag.*, XXI. 169-170.

negro artisans, and respected their skill to the extent at least that they made vigorous complaint of the competition between white and slave artisans. For example, the South Carolina Commons Journal of 1744⁵⁸ contains an interesting petition of one Andrew Ruck, a shipwright, on behalf of himself and several other shipwrights. He complains that negro slaves worked in Charleston and other places near the same town, at the shipwright's trade, and were "chiefly employed in mending, repairing, and caulking of ships, other vessels and boats"; that as a result white shipwrights could meet with little or no work, were reduced to poverty, and would be obliged to leave the province if not relieved; that such a practice would discourage white shipwrights from settling in the province; and therefore the petitioners asked that relief be granted by the assembly. This petition was referred to a committee who reported that five other ship-carpenters had sent in a petition denouncing Andrew Ruck and others, and declaring that there was no lack of work; that because of scarcity of white shipwrights slaves had to do the work; that the remonstrants were themselves, by trade, ship-carpenters, and through diligence and savings had purchased several negro slaves, and had with great care and pains trained these slaves to be useful to them in the exercise of their trade, "and to be necessary for the support of them and their families when by age or infirmity they became incapable of labor". The committee reported that the number of negroes hired out, "without a proportion of white men to do the business of ship-wright or ship-carpenter, is a discouragement to white men of that business", advised a bill limiting the number of negro shipwrights, and suggested an inquiry to ascertain the wages of this class of white and negro artisans. A report of another committee in 1744,⁵⁹ appointed to suggest effectual measures for increasing the number of white persons in the province, complained that one hindrance to such increase was that "a great number of negroes are brought up to and daily employed in Mechanic Trades both in Town and Country", and proposed that the negro act be amended by introducing a clause to prohibit "the bringing up of Negroes and other Slaves to Mechanic Trades in which white persons are usually employed". But the interest of many persons who were profiting from this practice prevented the passage of such a bill. There was an attempt to limit the practice by a local ordinance of Charleston in 1751. This order declared "that no Inhabitant of Charlestown shall be permitted to

⁵⁸ MS. Commons Journal of S. C., January 25, 1743/4, pp. 144-145.

⁵⁹ MS. Trans. S. C., vol. XXI., 1743-1744, pp. 332-334.

keep more than two male Slaves, to work out for Hire, as Porters, Labourers, Fishermen or Handicraftsmen".⁶⁰

A third source of information respecting the value of the slave artisan and the growing effect of his competition with white labor, is the evidence contained in laws passed to prevent competition. Laws were enacted in South Carolina in 1712 and 1740 restricting the right of the master in hiring out his slaves unless the latter were under some person's care. It was also stipulated that the owner should receive all the wages earned by the slave.⁶¹ A by-law of the trustees of Georgia, in 1750, forbade any artificer, except coopers, to take negroes as apprentices, or planters to lend or to let out their slaves "to be employed otherwise than in manuring and cultivating their Plantations in the Country".⁶² Later, in 1782, Virginia forbade masters to hire out their slaves and receive the pay.⁶³

Miscellaneous evidence of the value and efficiency of slave artisans is the testimony of Hugh Jones, in 1724, already quoted.⁶⁴ Governor Dinwiddie wrote in 1754 as follows: "I shall look cut for Negro Coopers tho' I fear Success as the Owners of such do not care to part with them, but shall do my Endeavour. If you can purchase or hire, I shall be very well pleased."⁶⁵ A Virginia advertisement of a lottery, 1767, for disposing of lands and slaves, announced prizes of negro slave artisans with values, and certificates of the same, given by two men who appraised them. One was a "fine sawyer and clapboard carpenter" with his wife and child, valued at £180; another "was as good a sawyer as any in the colony, and understands clapboard work", valued at £100; a third, "A very fine Mulatto woman . . . [who] understands all kind of needle work," valued at £100; and a fourth, a mulatto woman who was a "very good mantua maker", valued at £100, including her child.⁶⁶ On the other hand, there is some testimony to the effect that slave artisans were not efficient. Washington gives us an unfavorable impression of his negro sawyers and carpenters in 1760.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ *S. C. Gaz.*, May 6, 1751.

⁶¹ Cooper, *Statutes of S. C.*, VII. 363, 407-408.

⁶² *Colonial Records of Georgia*, ed. Candler, I. 58.

⁶³ Hening, *Statutes of Va.*, XI. 59.

⁶⁴ Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39. See also notes 25, 38.

⁶⁵ *Va. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, Dinwiddie Papers, I. 421.

⁶⁶ *Va. Gaz.* (Purdie and Dixon), September 3, 1767.

⁶⁷ *Washington's Writings*, ed. Ford, II. 147. Some advertisements indicate the artisan's degree of skill, in the opinion of the owner at least, or the amount of special training that he had obtained. For example there were offered for sale "Four negro men sawyers that can whet, set and lay Timbers". Another offer mentions "two compleat Bricklayers—whose abilities in workmanship are inferior

But whatever the shortcomings of the slave artisans, the weight of evidence shows that there was a great increase in numbers; that they were of much greater value than untrained slaves; that they were much sought after; that they did compete with free white labor, especially in the towns; and finally that they were the most important agency in the rise of plantation manufactures. It is certain also that the negro slave artisan was an important agency in the commercial development of the southern colonies, first, in relation to the necessary manufactures connected with the export of tobacco, rice, and naval stores, the making of staves, hogsheds, and barrels; secondly, in the manufacture of staves and lumber and other forest products for export; thirdly, in the tanning industries, the making of leather for home consumption and for export. He was also a not inconsiderable factor in offsetting the evils of the English commercial system, in helping the planters to diversify farming and occupations, and in helping them to solve the most pressing problem of trade with England—that of avoiding almost certain debt and perhaps bankruptcy. By raising products more valuable than tobacco and manufacturing at home many articles resulting from the new sources of raw material, and by utilizing the natural resources, the tendency to get more and more heavily in debt to English merchants was lessened. Indeed it is hard to see how the eighteenth-century plantation could have survived if the negro slave had not made his important contributions as an artisan, in the building and other trades, calling for skill in transforming raw materials into manufactured articles. The self-sufficiency of the southern colonies, made necessary by the Revolution, was more successful than it could have been if the negro slave artisan had not been developing for generations before. We may also believe that the relation of the negro slave to the later history of the plantation régime in the southern colonies, in its industrial as well as its agricultural aspect, was greatly influenced by the industrial training the slave received before the Revolution. Finally, we may conclude

to none in this province, of their complexion, being brought up by a person well experienced in that business". More convincing of the possible skill of the negro slave is a "want advertisement": "Wanted in the Country immediately, on Hire by the Month or Year or job, two Negro Carpenters That can frame a Barn of any Dimensions or Plantation Out-Building on Sills". Negro artisans who had served a regular apprenticeship were of course likely to have the most skill in their trade. One such was offered for sale with this description, viz., a negro carpenter who had served seven years to one of the "Compleatest House-joiners in the Province". *S. C. Gaz.*, February 1, 1734/35, September 7, 1769, July 9, 1772; *South Carolina and American General Gazette*, February 7, 1770.

that the evidence given of the industrial training of the negro slave is important in estimating the development of his intelligence and his capacity for the acquisition of mechanical skill. The industrial discipline which the slave received in the pre-Revolutionary period both prepared the way for his freedom, and no doubt lessened the shock when it came, and laid the foundation for his later status in a modern industrial and agricultural society.

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